

MEMORANDUM

ADOPTED
May 31, 1990

TO: BOSTON REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY BOARD AND
STEPHEN COYLE, DIRECTOR

FROM: HOMER RUSSELL, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF URBAN DESIGN AND
DEVELOPMENT
ERIC SCHMIDT, DIRECTOR OF URBAN DESIGN

SUBJECT: LEATHER DISTRICT PLAN AND LEATHER DISTRICT ZONING

SUMMARY: THE LEATHER DISTRICT PLAN, ARTICLE 44 OF THE BOSTON ZONING CODE, IS THE SIXTH DISTRICT PLAN AND ZONING DEVELOPED PURSUANT TO THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE DOWNTOWN ZONING PLAN, ENACTED IN SEPTEMBER, 1987, AND FOLLOWS THE RECENTLY COMPLETED CHINATOWN PLAN AND PERMANENT ZONING. THE SUBMISSION OF THIS PLAN AND ZONING TO THE BOARD CONTINUES A PUBLIC REVIEW PERIOD WHICH IS SCHEDULED TO END WITH THE FORMAL ADOPTION OF THE PLAN AND PERMANENT LEATHER DISTRICT ZONING NEXT MONTH.

The Leather District Plan and Zoning have been developed to ensure that new development is compatible with and supportive of the historic image and existing mix of uses within the District and that any new development reinforces the historic districts within the City.

The Leather District is a 10-block area bordered by the Surface Artery on the west, Essex Street on the north, Atlantic Avenue to the east and Kneeland Street to the south. The District is located between the South Station Economic Development Area and the Chinatown Neighborhood, both of which recently received BRA and Zoning Board approvals for permanent zoning. In conjunction with the South Station and Chinatown Neighborhood planning process, the Leather District planning process has resulted in establishing the area as an Historic Preservation Area. The purpose of the Leather District Zoning is primarily to:

- o preserve the historic character of the District by reinforcing the traditional facade and cornice lines of its existing buildings and regulating the size, location, design and materials of rooftop additions and rooftop mechanical units;
- o ensure that new development throughout the District is compatible with existing buildings and uses and reflects a human scale both in massing and detailing through new design controls.

APPENDIX B to ARTICLE 44

Definitions

For the purposes of this article only, the following words and phrases, when capitalized, shall have the meanings indicated.

1. "Applicant" means any person or entity having a legal or equitable interest in a Proposed Project subject to the provisions of this article, as set forth in Section 41-4, or the authorized agent of any such person or entity.
2. "Corner Parcel" means a parcel located at the intersection of two public streets.
3. "Curb Line" means the line of the curb or other structure or indication separating the portion of the street devoted to vehicular traffic, from the sidewalk.
4. "Ground Floor Ceiling Height" means the height of the underside of the floor structure of the second floor.
5. "Display Window Area" means that portion of the Street Wall between (i) a height of two (2) feet above the ground floor and (ii) the height of the underside of the floor structure of the second floor, or fourteen (14) feet, whichever is less.
6. "Ground Level Uses" means the uses listed in Appendix B to this article.
7. "Historic Building" means any building listed in the Boston Landmarks Commission Survey of Boston as a Category One, Category Two, Category Three, or Category Four building.
8. "Lobby Entrance Area" means the frontage at street level of the lobby of an office, residential, hotel/motel, or other structure.
9. "Leather District Plan" means the zoning regulations applicable to the Leather District and the plan for the District as evidenced by applicable development precedents and planning studies and any applicable comprehensive plan for the District, adopted by the Boston Redevelopment Authority pursuant to Chapter 652 of the Acts of 1960, Section 3 of Chapter 4 of the Ordinances of 1952, and Section 27D-18 of the code.
10. "Leather District" means the area, so entitled, depicted on Map 1G of this Code.
11. "Modal Street Wall Height" means the most frequently occurring cornice height among all the buildings on the block.
12. "Proposed Project" means the demolition, erection, reconstruction, structural alteration, or extension of any structure or part thereof, or the change of use of any structure or land, for which the Applicant is required to obtain a

building or use permit. A Proposed Project may proceed in phases and may include more than one building, structure, or use.

13. "State Building Code" means the state building code and amendments and rules and regulations thereto as promulgated by the state board of building regulations under sections ninety-three, ninety-four, and ninety-five of Chapter One Hundred Forty-Three of the General Laws.
14. "Street Wall" means the portion of the exterior wall (including recesses, bays, windows, doors, and other features) of a Proposed Project that fronts on a public street (excluding public alleys) and is below the Street Wall Height, determined pursuant to Section 44-7.
15. "Street Wall Plane" means the planar surface of the Street Wall (disregarding recesses, bays, windows, doors, etc.) required pursuant to Section 44-7.
16. "Substantial Rehabilitation" means alterations or repairs to a structure or structures, costing in excess of fifty percent (50%) of the physical value of the structure or structures. Physical value of a structure or structures shall be based on the assessed value as recorded on the assessment rolls of the City as of the January 1 preceding the date of application for zoning action.
17. "Zoning Relief" means any zoning variance, exception, conditional use permit, interim planning permit, or zoning map or text change, or any other relief granted by the Zoning Commission or the Board of Appeal.

- o promote mixed residential, office, artist studios, retail, service and light industrial uses (such as ceramics or furniture assembly) in the District;
- o protect current residential uses and promote the expansion of residential uses in addition to combined living and working space for artists; and
- o encourage active pedestrian use of the District by reinvigorating existing ground-floor retail and service establishments and expanding retail, service and cultural uses within the District.

The Leather District Plan establishes a comprehensive set of urban design and preservation guidelines which will ensure that any development will be compatible with the existing environment, that the historic character of the area is preserved, and that the mixed residential, office, artist studios, retail and service uses continue to co-exist. The Plan ensures that all new development, either by rooftop addition or a new structure, is responsive to the existing buildings in scale, design and materials.

The Plan will allow modest and respectful development to infill within the neighborhood on vacant or under-utilized sites, and it will establish design regulations and guidelines for those existing landowners who wish to erect rooftop additions or new structures and to do so in a manner that is consistent with the area and of a traditionally high-quality design and use of materials. There are only a few vacant or under-utilized sites where new buildings are economically feasible, and as such, the existing uses and activities of the area will be protected and allowed to flourish.

The District is a unique historic area and is home to a diverse mix of uses. Small businesses, professionals, residences, retailers, and small warehouses are active and coexist in a blend of urban living that is unique to only a few American cities. As such, the Plan and Zoning recognize these important civic attributes and have been crafted through a community process aimed at preserving the character of this District.

The Zoning Plan will allow development at the scale and density for the Area of 80 ft. FAR 6, enhanced to 100 ft. FAR 8 or approximately 6 to 8 floors. This height can be attained through either new construction or by roof-top additions. The enhanced height requires the developer to submit to the Article 31 review process.

Design regulations and guidelines will ensure that these new features will fit into the Area and ensure that new development

enhances the quality of the physical environment. Controls governing the street-wall height, setbacks and ground-floor glazing are just a few of the design elements that will direct all development in the Area. Furthermore, these regulations will preserve the historic architectural character in the Area.

Planned Development Areas, previously allowed in both South Station and Chinatown, are prohibited in the Leather District.

Use controls will reinforce the existing activities in the neighborhood. Day care is a requirement for large developments and the Housing Priority Area provision will require that large commercial developments also build housing either on or off-site. In addition, the conditional use and/or forbidden use controls will restrict or prohibit uses that are not compatible to the existing District.

The Area is a restricted parking district. As such, the provision of Article 23, off-street parking, shall govern. Off-street loading is also restricted by provision of Article 24. Finally, the traffic issues of the Area will be further addressed and resolved through an on-going neighborhood planning process with the State DPW and its planning for the Central Artery Project.

In conclusion, the Plan and permanent Zoning will provide for the continuance and preservation of the uses and character of the Area in a manner consistent to the concerns of both its residents and landowners. The preparation of the proposed zoning for the Leather District and its submission for public review and comment is part of the on-going process of developing new permanent zoning for the City of Boston.

Appropriate votes follow:

VOTED: That, in the matter of the proposed permanent zoning for the Leather District, the Boston Redevelopment Authority hereby takes the matter under advisement and votes to keep open the period for receiving public comment until June 13, 1990, at 5:00 p.m. to be incorporated into the public record, staff shall consider the comments received and shall make recommendation of any changes to the BRA Board on June 14, 1990; and

FURTHER

VOTED: That the Boston Redevelopment Authority hereby authorizes the Director to petition the Zoning Commission to adopt the proposed Zoning Plan, Article 44, and map amendments establishing Article 44 in the Zoning Code as permanent zoning for the Leather District as presented to the Boston Redevelopment Authority on May 31, 1990; and

FURTHER

VOTED:

That the Boston Redevelopment Authority hereby authorizes the Director to petition the Zoning Commission to adopt the zoning, Article 44 for the Leather District in substantial accord with the amendments presented to the Boston Redevelopment Authority on May 31, 1990.

ARTICLE 44
LEATHER DISTRICT

SECTION 4-1. Purpose. The purpose of this article is to establish the zoning regulations for the Leather District in accordance with the provisions of the Zoning Commission and the City of Boston. The article is intended to provide for the development and use of the Leather District in a manner consistent with the City's general plan and the Zoning Commission's regulations.

SECTION 4-2. Description of the Leather District. The Leather District is located in the City of Boston, and is bounded by the following streets: [illegible]. The district is intended to be used for the development and use of the Leather District in a manner consistent with the City's general plan and the Zoning Commission's regulations.

Doc # 5307

ADOPTED

5/31/90

Text Amendment Application No.
Boston Redevelopment Authority
Leather District

TO THE ZONING COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF BOSTON:

The Boston Redevelopment Authority petitions to amend the text of the Boston Zoning Code, as established under Chapter 665 of the Acts of 1956 as amended, as follows.

By inserting, after Article 43, the following article:

**ARTICLE 44
LEATHER DISTRICT**

SECTION 44-1. Statement of Purpose, Goals and Objectives. The purpose of this article is to establish the zoning regulations for the comprehensive plan for the Leather District as required by the provisions of the Downtown Interim Planning Overlay District, Article 27D of this code. The goals and objectives of this article and the Leather District Plan are to preserve the historic and architectural character of the Leather District; to promote the mixed residential, office, studio, retail and service uses of the Leather District; and to ensure that new development is compatible with existing buildings in scale, design and choice of building and decorative materials.

SECTION 44-2. Recognition of the Leather District Plan. In accordance with Section 27D-18 of this code, which requires production of comprehensive planning policies, development controls, and design guidelines for Special Study Areas in the Downtown Interim Planning Overlay District, including the Leather District (Special Study Area No. 9), the Zoning Commission hereby recognizes the Leather District Plan as the general plan for the Leather District. The Leather District Plan shall also serve as the portion of the general plan for the City of Boston

applicable to the Leather District. This Article is one of the means of implementing the Leather District Plan, the preparation of which is pursuant to Section 70 of Chapter 41 of the General Laws, Section 652 of the Acts of 1960, and Section 3 of Chapter 4 of the Ordinances of 1952.

SECTION 44-3. Physical Boundaries. The provisions of this Article are applicable only in the Leather District. The boundaries of the Leather District are as shown on a map entitled, "Map 1G - Leather District (supplemental to 'Map 1 Boston Proper')" of the series of maps entitled "Zoning Districts - City of Boston," as amended.

SECTION 44-4. Applicability. This Article together with the rest of this Code constitutes the zoning regulation for the Leather District and applies as specified in Section 4-1 regarding the conformity of structures and land to this Code. Exceptions to the provisions of this Article, pursuant to Article 6A, shall not be available except to the extent expressly provided in this Article or Article 6A. Application of the provisions of Article 27D to the Leather District is rescinded on the effective date of this Article, except as provided below. Where conflicts exist between the provisions of this Article and the remainder of the Code, the provisions of this Article shall govern. For the Leather District except where specifically otherwise indicated in this Article, the provisions of this Article supersede Article 8 (except Section 8-6), Article 13 (except Section 13-3), and Articles 14 through 24, inclusive, of this Code. The following Proposed Projects, however, are exempt from the provisions of this Article, and are governed by the rest of this Code, including Article 27D:

1. Any Proposed Project for which application to the Inspectional Services Department for a building or use permit has been made prior to the first notice of hearing before the Zoning Commission for adoption of this Article and for which no Zoning Relief is required.
2. Any Proposed Project for which appeal to the Board of Appeal for any Zoning Relief has been made prior to the first notice of hearing before the Zoning Commission for adoption of this Article, provided that such Zoning Relief has been or thereafter is granted by the Board of Appeal pursuant to such appeal.

SECTION 44-5. As-of-Right Building Height and Floor Area Ratio. A Proposed Project within the Leather District is allowed an as-of-right building height of eighty (80) feet and a floor area ratio (FAR) of 6; provided that; any Proposed Project shall have an as-of-right building height of one hundred (100) feet and an as-of-right FAR of eight (8), if such Proposed Project is subject to or elects to comply with the provisions of Article 31, Development Review Requirements, and the Boston Redevelopment Authority has certified that the Proposed Project complies with Article 31.

SECTION 44-6. Rooftop Additions within the Leather District. No roof structure designed or used for human occupancy, access, mechanical systems, or storage shall be erected or enlarged on the roof of any Historic Building within the Leather District, unless after public notice and hearing and subject to Sections 6-2, 6-3, and 6-4 the Board of Appeal grants permission therefor. In reaching its decision, said Board shall consider whether such roof structure is

architecturally consistent with the distinctive historical and architectural character of the Leather District Protection Area. Rooftop additions that align with masonry walls of existing structures should extend masonry materials. Elsewhere, they should use metal and glass wall systems. Materials such as stucco and Glass Fibre Reinforced Concrete (GFRC) are prohibited. The Board of Appeal shall not grant any such appeal for a roof structure that is visible from any point on any public way within the District, as indicated on Map A, except that rooftop additions visible from a public way via a sight line down a private way are permissible, with the approval of the Board of Appeal. The Inspectional Services Department shall transmit a copy of the appeal for the conditional use to the Boston Landmarks Commission. The Boston Landmarks Commission may, within thirty days after the date of such transmittal, file with the Board of Appeal a recommendation, provided that if no such recommendation is received within said thirty days, the Board of Appeal may render its decision without such recommendation.

SECTION 44-7. Specific Design Requirements. Except as otherwise expressly provided in this Article or Code, all Proposed Projects within the Leather District shall comply with the specific design requirements established in this section. The provisions of Article 6A shall be applicable to the provisions of this Section 44-7.

1. **Street Wall Continuity.** A Street Wall of any Proposed Project shall be built to be coextensive with the building line on any street identified in Table B, as defined in clause 7A of Section 2-1, of the block on which the Street Wall faces. If there is no determinable building line of said block, then said Street Wall shall be built at a depth from the Curb Line equal to that of the

building line farthest from the curb line of the two blocks adjacent to said block, facing onto the same street. If there is no determinable building line of either of said adjacent blocks, then (i) if the Proposed Project is subject to or elects to comply with the development review provisions of Article 31, an appropriate Street Wall location shall be determined in the development review process or (ii) otherwise, notwithstanding any contrary revision of Section 31-4, the Proposed Project shall be deemed subject to the development review provisions of Article 31 for the limited purpose of determining an appropriate Street Wall location.

Except as otherwise provided in this Subsection 44-7.1, Street Walls shall be continuous across a lot. However, design articulation involving deviations from the Street Wall Plane of two (2) feet or less shall be permitted across the Street Wall. For Proposed Projects neither subject to nor electing to comply with the development review requirements of Article 31, recesses in Street Walls shall be permitted as set forth in Table A of this Section or as may be required under law to provide access to physically handicapped individuals. For Proposed Projects which are subject to or elect to comply with the development review requirements of Article 31, recesses shall be permitted if appropriate to the creation of visually interesting designs, or if necessary to accommodate access to handicapped individuals or to accommodate a specific ground level function, such as a hotel or residential carriageway, provided that the facade remains compatible with its historical and architectural surroundings and visual continuity in the block front is preserved, as certified by the Boston Redevelopment Authority in accordance with the urban design provisions of Article 31.

TABLE A
PERMITTED STREET WALL RECESSES

<u>Location</u>	<u>Maximum Depth from the Street Wall Plane</u>	<u>Maximum Aggregate Surface Area</u>
Below Ground Floor Ceiling Height	Ten (10) feet	Fifty percent (50%)
Above Ground Floor Ceiling Height	Ten (10) feet	Fifty percent (50%)
	Fifteen (15) feet	Thirty percent (30%)

The "maximum aggregate surface area" means the portion, expressed as a percentage, of the surface area of the specified part of the Street Wall Plane (i.e., above or below the ground floor ceiling height) affected by recesses. The areas within which recesses are permitted are not cumulative; i.e., the maximum aggregate surface area that may be affected by recesses, whether of 10 or 15 feet, is 50%.

2. **Street Wall Height.** The Street Wall Height of Proposed Projects within the Leather District shall not exceed eighty (80) feet or the Modal Street Wall Height, whichever is less. The endwall of a street which is a cul-de-sac does not count as a Street Wall for the purposes of this Section 44-7.

3. **Display Window Area Regulations.** The provisions of this Subsection 3 apply only to Proposed Projects with gross floor areas of 50,000 square feet or more and only to Street Walls facing Atlantic Avenue, Surface Artery Street, Kneeland Street, Essex Street, Lincoln Street, Beach Street, East Street, Tufts Street, and South Street. The Display Window Area, excluding any portion occupied by a permitted Lobby Entrance Area or entrance/exit to an off-street parking or loading area, shall be sufficiently and appropriately glazed and transparent, with sufficient individual storefront entrances, to encourage active pedestrian use, as certified by the Boston Redevelopment Authority in accordance with the urban design provisions of Article 31.

Glazed portions of the Display Window Area, excluding storefront entrances and Lobby Entrance Areas, shall be used to a depth of at least two (2) feet for: (i) the display of goods and services available for purchase on the premises; or (ii) an area for exhibits and announcements. However, the provisions of the preceding sentence do not apply to foyer space for cultural uses, restaurants, or other active storefront uses.

4. **Setback and Floorplate Requirements.**

- (a) Sky Plane Setbacks. Other than decorative cornices and other surface ornamentation, any portion of a Proposed Project for new construction (including, but not limited to, mechanical equipment and not including rooftop additions), which portion faces a street listed in Table B of this article, shall be set back by not less than fifteen (15) feet.

TABLE B

STREETS ON WHICH SKY PLANE SETBACKS ARE REQUIRED

Lincoln Street
Beach Street
East Street
Tufts Street
South Street

Atlantic Avenue
Surface Artery Street
Kneeland Street
Essex Street

The Sky Plane Setback provisions established in this subsection are not applicable to the extent that, as a consequence of such provisions, the maximum possible gross floor area for any floor of a Proposed Project would be less than 50% of the gross floor area of the highest occupied floor below the Street Wall Height for projects on Corner Parcels, and 66% of the gross floor area of the highest occupied floor below the Street Wall Height for projects on parcels within the block.

SECTION 44-8. Leather District Design Guidelines. Within the Leather District, any Proposed Project for:

- (a) A rooftop addition that is not visible from a street indicated on Map A;
- (b) the erection of a new building, addition or extension to an existing building;
- (c) exterior alteration affecting more than five hundred square feet of the Street Wall Facade of an existing building above the Ground Floor Ceiling Height;
- (d) exterior alteration changing the cornice line, height of the Street Wall or Building Height of an existing building

shall proceed only if the Boston Redevelopment Authority finds that the Proposed Project is consistent with the standards and design guidelines specified in this Section.

1. **Procedure for Approval of Proposed Project.** Each application for a permit for a Proposed Project subject to the provisions of this section shall be filed in triplicate with the Inspectional Services Department, which shall retain one copy for its files and transmit the other copies as follows: one to the Boston Redevelopment Authority and the other to the Boston Landmarks Commission. The Boston Landmarks Commission may, within thirty days after the date of such transmittal, file with the Boston Redevelopment Authority a report with recommendations, together with material, maps, or plans to aid the Boston Redevelopment Authority in determining consistency with the standards for approval set forth in this section. The Boston

LEATHER DISTRICT PROPOSED ZONING



Map A

Redevelopment Authority shall not notify the Inspectional Services Department of its findings on the application for a Proposed Project until such report with recommendations has been received and considered, provided that if no such report is received within said thirty days, the Boston Redevelopment Authority may certify to the Inspectional Services Department its findings without such report. The Boston Redevelopment Authority may find that the Proposed Project is consistent with the standards set forth in this Section or is not consistent with the standards set forth in this Section; provided that if no such findings are transmitted to the Inspectional Services Department within forty-five days of the receipt by the Boston Redevelopment Authority of the application for a Proposed Project, the Proposed Project shall be deemed to be consistent with the standards set forth in this section without need for further action. Any Applicant aggrieved by the denial of any permit by the Inspectional Services Department pursuant to this Section may appeal to the Board of Appeal within forty-five (45) days after such denial for a permit, in accordance with the provisions of Article 6.

2. **Design Guidelines.** In reaching its decision, the Boston Redevelopment Authority shall consider whether the Proposed Project is consistent with the design guidelines herein and the District's historic character and current mixed residential, office, artists' studio, retail and service uses. In addition, the Boston Redevelopment Authority shall consider whether the Proposed Project meets the following special design considerations, which are intended as recommended guidelines, and original alternatives will be considered, provided they meet the same goals and undergo a public review process.

- (a) **Historic Building Facades.** Historic Buildings should be renovated rather than replaced, and existing facades must be used, if reasonably possible, so as to maintain the historic architectural contribution of the district. Existing facade fenestration should be retained and/or restored. In the event that restoration is not possible, replacement units should replicate the essential architectural characteristics of the existing windows, such as mullion depth and width, color, and predominant shadow lines.
- (b) **Compatibility with Historic Context.** New buildings, rooftop additions, and facade renovations should be designed such that the exterior proportions, scale, massing, window treatment, materials, colors, and architectural detailing are compatible with the observable architectural character of the existing late 19th century masonry warehouse structures in the Leather District. To preserve a lot-by-lot appearance, facade ornamentation should be varied, and facades should be divided into modules to reflect the lot width established by Historic Buildings within the Leather District, and to continue the established rhythm of each block.
- (c) **Base to Height Ratio.** Proposed Projects should be consistent with the Leather District's conglomeration of small building masses which meet the streets with discretely organized facades, each of which contains local symmetries and other ordering principles. Vertically oriented facades, typical but not exclusive in the district, are encouraged.

- (d) **Storefront Details and Signage.** Granite storefront details should be preserved and restored. Cast iron storefront details and flush painted signs are encouraged.
- (e) **Recessed Store Entrances.** For all new buildings with a building height of sixty (60) feet or more, entrances to Ground Level Uses should be recessed in a manner consistent with traditional storefront entrances in the Leather District.
- (f) **Base and First Floor Cornice Line.** New development should have a pronounced cornice line or belt course separating the ground floor from the upper floors and should create a visually strong base.
- (g) **Upper Cornice.** New structures should have pronounced upper cornices which are consistent with upper cornices on existing structures and which create a sense of finality to the building's top. Typical cornice materials, such as masonry/stone, copper, or painted metal, should be used.
- (h) **Solid to Void Ratios.** Solid to void ratios should emphasize the strong vertical and horizontal patterns that are characteristic of historic architecture in the district.
- (i) **Windows** which recede from the face of the building, arched windows or window heads, and windows accented by lintels and sills are encouraged to the extent that they are consistent with and reinforce

the architectural and historic character of the District. Large, undifferentiated panes of glass are not appropriate except for storefronts. New masonry window openings in existing buildings are discouraged, particularly to the extent that they are incompatible with the character of the traditional building facades in the District.

(j) Rooftop Mechanical Units. Rooftop mechanical units must be located so as not to be visible from a public way within the District as indicated on Map A, except that units which are visible from a public way via a sight line down a private way are permissible, with approval of the Board of Appeal.

(k) Building Materials. Primary building materials should be masonry, including brick, limestone, terra cotta, sandstone, and granite. New materials (e.g., architectural precast concrete) should be consistent in surface texture and color with existing traditional materials.

SECTION 44-9. Establishment of Planned Development Areas Prohibited.

Establishment of Planned Development Areas, as described in Section 3-1A.a, is prohibited in the Leather District.

SECTION 44-10. Leather District Use Regulations. In the Leather District, the use of land and structures is regulated as provided in this Section. The provisions of Article 8 apply only as specified in this Section, except that Section 8-6 applies. No land or structure shall be erected, used, or arranged or

designed to be used, in whole or in part, except in conformity with the provisions of this Section 44-10.

1. **Housing Priority Area.** Notwithstanding any other provision of this Article to the contrary, within the Leather District for any Proposed Project which has more than ten thousand (10,000) square feet and which involves new construction or change in the use of a building, or for any Proposed Project which has more than 10,000 square feet and which involves Substantial Rehabilitation of an existing structure, a minimum of one (1) square foot of gross floor area shall be devoted to Residential Uses allowed under Section 44.8 for every three (3) square feet of gross floor area of the Proposed Project not devoted to such Residential Uses. The Housing Priority Area regulation does not apply to the ground floor level or to any space devoted to Cultural Uses, uses accessory to Cultural Uses, or space devoted to community services.

2. **Inclusion of Day Care Facilities.** The provisions of this Section apply only to Proposed Projects which exceed a building height of eighty (80) feet, or an FAR of six (6), or both. Any Proposed Project having a gross floor area (not including the floor area devoted to Residential Uses, Community Uses, or Cultural Uses, as those uses are described in Subsection 4 of this Section), which equals or exceeds one hundred thousand (100,000) square feet, shall devote to day care facilities an amount of floor area equal to the amount listed below in Table C of this Section. For the purposes of this Subsection and Table C only, floor area devoted exclusively to hotel uses shall be multiplied by 0.5 before being used in the calculation of required day care facilities. An Applicant for a Proposed Project subject to the

provisions of this Subsection may fulfill its obligations under this Subsection by (a) creating such facilities on-site; or (b) creating such facilities, or causing such facilities to be created, in the vicinity of the Proposed Project, within the Leather District, the South Station Economic Development Area, or Chinatown. Any Proposed Project subject to the provisions of this Subsection shall devote to on-site day care facilities an amount of floor area equal to at least four thousand (4,000) square feet or the minimum required square footage, whichever is less. The provision of day care facilities in accordance with this Subsection shall be in conformity with written regulations to be adopted by the Boston Redevelopment Authority after public notice and hearing. For the purposes of this paragraph, the term "day care facilities" includes the finish, furnishings, and equipment required for use of the floor area for such facilities, to enroll people for care, instruction, or recreation during regular business hours.

TABLE C

PROVISION OF DAY CARE FACILITIES

<u>Size of Proposed Project (Gross Floor Area)</u>	<u>Minimum Day Care Facilities (Gross Floor Area)</u>
100,000 up to 200,000 s.f.	2% of gross floor area
200,001 up to 500,000 s.f.	4,000 s.f.
500,001 up to 1,000,000 s.f.	8,000 s.f.
More than 1,000,000 s.f.	12,000 s.f.

- 3. Ground Level Uses in the Leather District.** Within a Proposed Project, uses with street frontage on Atlantic, Beach, East, Essex, Kneeland, Lincoln, South, Surface Artery, or Tufts Streets, either located on the ground level or entered by stairs from a sidewalk entry are limited to the permissible Ground Level Uses, as listed in Appendix A to this Article. A display

window physically contiguous to a Ground Level Use or with exhibits or displays operated and maintained by an occupant of the building in which said window is located, is allowed as a Ground Level Use. All other uses with street frontage which are otherwise allowed by this Section 44-10 are conditional uses when located on the ground level or entered by stairs from a sidewall entry.

4. **Allowed Uses.** No land or structure in the Leather District shall be erected, used, or arranged or designed to be used, in whole or in part, for any use not specified in this Subsection 4, or in Subsection 5, which sets forth "Conditional Uses," and subject to the procedural requirements set forth in Article 6. Any use so specified in this Subsection 4 shall be allowed as a matter of right, subject only to the provisions of this Section 44-10 including, without limitation, Subsections 1, 2, and 3 hereof.
 - (a) **Residential Uses.** Limited to multifamily dwelling, lodging or boarding house, or temporary housing shelters. Residential uses include any Affordable dwelling units, including but not limited to Affordable dwelling units which are rental units, condominiums, or limited equity share cooperatives.
 - (b) **Restaurant Uses.** Limited to the service or sale of food or drink for on-premises consumption, or for sale over the counter, not wholly incidental to a local retail business or restaurant use, of on-premises prepared food or drink for off-premises consumption or for on-premises consumption if, as so sold, such food or drink is ready for take-out, provided that, uses described in use item 38A are forbidden.

- (c) Cultural and Entertainment Uses. Library or museum open to the general public, gallery, (nonprofit or for profit) concert hall, legitimate theater (commercial or nonprofit) including motion picture or video theater, but not drive-in theater; auditorium, performance space, artist's studio, music or performance practice spaces.
- (d) Office Uses. Limited to business or professional offices; clinics; real estate, insurance, or other agency or government office; office building; post office; or bank (other than drive-in bank) or similar establishment.
- (e) Hotel Uses.
- (f) Group Care Residence, limited, as defined by clause 22B of Section 2-1, provided that: (a) no limited group care residence is within 1,000 feet of another limited group care residence; and (b) a cooperation agreement exists relating to the location and operation of such facilities between the Boston Redevelopment Authority, the City of Boston, and the agency of the Commonwealth operating, licensing, or regulating such facilities.
- (g) Community Uses. Day care center, family care center, nursery school, kindergarten, elementary or secondary school, community health center or clinic; community center, settlement house, or community service facility.

- (h) Recreational Uses. Limited to private grounds for games and sports; other social, recreational, or sports center conducted for profit; private club operated for members only (including quarters of fraternal or sororal organizations); or adult education center.
- (i) Public Service Uses. Limited to public service pumping station, sub-station, automatic telephone exchange, fire station or police station, subject to St. 1956, c. 665, s. 2.
- (j) Wholesale Uses. Limited to office or display or sales space of a wholesale, jobbing, or distributing house; and provided that not more than twenty-five percent (25%) of gross floor area devoted to this purpose is used for assembling, packaging, and storing merchandise.
- (k) Service Uses. Limited to video or film production studio; barber shop; beauty shop; shoe repair shop; self-service laundry; pick-up and delivery station of laundry or dry-cleaner; tailor shop; hand laundry; dry-cleaning shop; framer's studio; caterer's establishment; photographer's studio; printing plant; taxidermist's shop; upholster's shop; carpenter's shop; electrician's shop; plumber's shop; radio and television repair shop; funeral home; undertaker's establishment; mortuary; research laboratory; radio or television studio; animal hospital or clinic; kennel; or similar use provided that in laundries and cleaning establishments, only nonflammable solvents are used for cleaning.

- (l) General Retail Uses. Department store, furniture store, general merchandise mart, or other store serving the general retail business needs of a major part of the city, including accessory storage.
- (m) Local Retail Uses. Store primarily serving the local retail business or service needs of the neighborhood including, but not limited to store retailing one of the following: food, baked goods, groceries, packaged alcoholic beverages, drugs, tobacco products, clothing, dry goods, books, flowers, paint and other artist's supplies, hardware and other minor household appliances, furniture, books, and photographic equipment.
- (n) Institutional Uses. Limited to place of worship, monastery, convent, or parish house; elderly care facility; or clinic or professional offices accessory to a hospital or sanatorium, nursing or rest home, orphanage, or similar institution not for correctional purposes.
- (o) Accessory Uses subject to the limitations and restrictions of Article 10, limited to: a garage or parking space for occupants, employees, students, and visitors, provided that such use is accessory to a residential use, a hotel, a group care residence, or a dormitory, fraternity, or sorority house; a swimming pool or tennis court; the storage of flammable liquids and gases incidental to a lawful use; the manufacture, assembly, or packaging of products sold on the lot.

(p) Light Manufacturing Uses. Limited to the design, development, packaging, assembly, repairing, servicing, renting, testing, fabrication or handling of products including the following, provided that all machinery and equipment shall be so installed and maintained, and all activity in connection with such use shall be so conducted, in such manner that noise, smoke, dust, odor, and all other similar objectionable factors shall not cause a nuisance or injury to other persons in the vicinity:

1. ceramic products, including pottery and glazed tile;
2. electronic and communication products, including, but not limited to, computer equipment, sound equipment, and household appliances;
3. instruments for engineering, medical, dental, scientific, photographic, optical, or other similar professional use;
4. furniture or musical instrument production;
5. photographic supplies;
6. supplies related to printing or engraving;
7. garment assembly and alteration;
8. distribution of paper products, plumbing and interior decorating supplies and equipment;

9. leather cutting and/or assembly, but not leather tanning or coloring.

5. **Conditional Uses.** No land or structure in the Leather District shall be erected, used, or arranged or designed to be used, in whole or in part, for any use under the provisions of Article 6 unless such use is specified in this Subsection 44-10.5. The granting of a permit for any use so specified may be authorized conditionally by the Board of Appeal acting under the provisions of Article 6, subject to the regulations set forth in this Section 44-10.

- (a) Group Care Residence. Unless otherwise allowed pursuant to paragraph 4(f) of this section.
- (b) Parking. Parking lot or parking garage except for accessory uses permitted under Section 4(o).
- (c) Fast Food Restaurant Uses. Limited to sale over the counter, not wholly incidental to a use listed under paragraph 4(b) or 4(l) of this section, of on-premises prepared food or drink for off-premises consumption or for on-premises consumption if, as so sold, such food or drink is ready for take-out.
- (d) Vehicle Rental Uses. Rental motor vehicle and trailer agency accessory to a hotel or motel, provided that no rental vehicles or trailers are

parked on the street and that exterior lighting is arranged to shine downward and away from residences.

(e) Transportation Uses. Limited to bus terminal, bus station, subway station or railroad passenger station, airline shuttle service.

(f) Institutional Uses. Limited to college or university granting degrees by authority of the Commonwealth; trade, professional, or other school; machine shop or other noisy activity accessory to a school, college, or university adequately sound-insulated to protect the neighborhood from unnecessary noise; library or museum not open to the general public, hospital, sanitarium or clinic or professional office accessory to a hospital or sanitarium and located on the same lot.

(g) Any use on a lot adjacent to, or across the street from, but in the same district as, a lawful use to which it is ancillary and for which it would be a lawful accessory use if it were on the same lot; provided that any such use shall be subject to the same restrictions, conditions, limitations, provisos, and safeguards as the use to which it is ancillary.

(h) The change of use of any allowed residential use to any other use.

6. **Forbidden Uses.** No land or structure in the Leather District shall be erected, used or arranged or designed to be used, in whole or in part, for any use described in Use Item 34A and 38A or if such use is not specified in Sections 44-10.3 and 44-10.4 as an allowed or conditional use, except for

such nonconforming uses as may be allowed to be continued under the provisions of Article 9.

SECTION 44-11. Off-Street Parking. Within the Leather District, off-street parking facilities are not required in any Proposed Project, except for Proposed Projects including residential uses in which one (1) space shall be provided for each dwelling unit. The provisions of Article 23-8, 23-9, and 23-10 shall govern any Proposed Project in the Leather District for which off-street parking is required.

SECTION 44-12. Off-Street Loading. Within the Leather District, Article 24 provides the regulations governing the provision and design of off-street loading facilities for the use of any structure or land not subject to the provisions of Article 31, Development Review Requirements. Where a use specified in this article is not included in any use item number listed in Article 24, off-street loading facilities shall be provided in accordance with the requirements for the use item number listed in Article 24 which is most similar to such use. The provision and design of off-street loading facilities for the use of any structure or land which is subject to the provisions of Article 31 shall be determined through the Development Review Requirements process, and mitigative measures, as appropriate, shall be required through the Development Review Requirements process to minimize the deleterious effects of any off-street loading facilities on adjacent properties.

SECTION 44-13 Regulations. The Boston Redevelopment Authority may promulgate and amend from time to time regulations to administer this Article.

SECTION 44-14. Severability. The provisions and requirements of this Article are severable, and if any such requirements or provisions shall be held invalid by any decision of any court of competent jurisdiction, such decision shall not impair or otherwise affect any other provision or requirement of this Article.

SECTION 44-15. Definitions. Words and phrases defined in Appendix B to this Article, when capitalized in this Article, shall have the meanings set forth in said Appendix B.

SECTION 44-16. Appendices. The following appendices are attached to and are hereby made part of this article:

1. Appendix A - Ground Level Uses
2. Appendix B - Definitions

APPENDIX A to ARTICLE 44

Ground Level Uses

1. The following uses are Ground Level Uses, and are allowed uses within the Leather District, provided that the uses described in Use Items No. 34A and No. 38A are forbidden. This list is intended to be illustrative of ground level uses and not exclusive.

Antique stores
Appliances, repair shops
Appliances, sales
Art galleries, commercial and non-profit
Art metal craft shops
Art needle work shops
Artists' supply and music stores
Athletic goods stores
Auditoriums
Bakeries or pastry shops
Bank branch offices
Bank machines, provided that the ground level street frontage of a bank facility containing only bank machines is limited to twenty (20) feet
Barber shops
Beauty parlors
Bicycle stores, rental or repair
Book stores or card stores
Cafes
Candy stores
Carpet, rugs, linoleum, or other floor covering stores
Churches
Cigar stores
Clock or watch stores, or repair shops
Clothing retail establishments
Clothing stores (men's, women's, children's apparel)
Clubs, noncommercial
Coffee shops
Coin stores
Community centers
Costume rental establishments
Dance halls, public
Day Care Centers
Delicatessen stores
Department stores
Diners
Dressmaking shops, custom
Drug stores
Dry cleaning establishments or laundromats
Dry goods or fabric stores
Eating or drinking places
Electronic, video or audio sales or repair

APPENDIX A (continued)

Entrance/exit to off-street parking or loading area provided that it occupies not more than thirty (30) feet of ground level street frontage.

Entrance/exit to public transit facilities

Fabric or yarn store

Fire Stations

Fishing tackle or equipment stores, or rental establishments

Florist shops

Food stores, including supermarkets, produce and grocery stores, markets, health foods, delicatessens, prepared food/special food, spices and herbs, coffees, teas, meat, fish, poultry, and cheese stores

Furniture stores

Furrier shops, custom

Gift shops

Hair products for headwear

Hardware stores

Health club or gym (only a Lobby Entrance Area not occupying more than twenty (20) feet of ground level street frontage.

Historical exhibits, open to the public generally

Hobby shops

Hotel or motel (only a Lobby Entrance Area not occupying more than twenty (20) feet of ground level street frontage)

Housewares

Household appliance repair shops

Ice cream stores

Interior decorating establishments

Jewelry shops

Kitchenware

Lamp shops

Leather goods or luggage stores

Libraries, open to the public generally

Locksmith shops

Luggage stores

Millinery shops

Motion pictures or video production studio

Museums, open to the public generally

Music stores

Musical instruments, repair

Newsstands, enclosed

Office or business machine stores, sales or rental

Offices (only a Lobby Entrance Area not occupying more than twenty (20) feet of ground level street frontage.

Optician or optometrist establishments

Orthopedic stores

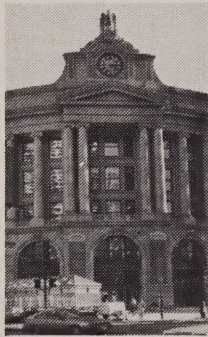
APPENDIX A (continued)

Paint stores
Parish houses
Parks, public or private
Party shops
Perfume shops
Pet shops
Photographic developing or printing establishments
Photographic equipment stores
Photographic studios
Photographic supply stores
Photostating establishments
Picture framing stores
Police stations
Post offices
Printing establishments
Radio appliance shop, repair or sales
Record stores
Recreational centers (noncommercial)
Residences (only a Lobby Entrance Area not occupying more than twenty (20) feet of ground level street frontage.
Sewing machine stores, selling household machines
Shoe repair and shoeshine shops
Shoe stores
Sign painting shops
Skating rinks, outdoor ice
Sporting goods stores
Sports shop
Stamp stores
Stationery stores
Studios: music, dancing, visual arts, or theatrical
Tailor shops, custom
Telegraph offices, FAX, or Express Mail
Television repair shops
Theater
Ticket sales
Tobacco stores
Tour operator
Toy stores
Typewriter stores
Typewriter or other small business machine repair stores
Variety or convenience stores
Video or motion picture store, sale or rentals
Wallpaper stores

5/31/90

PLAN TO MANAGE GROWTH

LEATHER DISTRICT



CITY OF BOSTON
Raymond L. Flynn, Mayor

BOSTON REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Stephen Coyle, Director
Clarence J. Jones, Chairman
Michael F. Donlan, Co-Vice Chairman
Francis X. O'Brien, Co-Vice Chairman
James K. Flaherty, Treasurer
Consuelo Gonzales-Thornell, Member
Kane Simonian, Secretary

MAY 1990

LEATHER DISTRICT PLAN

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FRAMEWORK FOR THE PLAN



I.FRAMEWORK FOR THE PLAN

Summary

The Leather District encompasses a small piece of downtown Boston bordered on the west by the Surface Central Artery; on the south by Kneeland Street; on the north by Essex Street; and, on the east by Atlantic Avenue. Its neighbors are Chinatown, the Midtown Cultural District, and the South Station Economic Development Area. Originally developed in the late 19th century as home to Boston's flourishing shoe and leather industry, the District's large, masonry warehouse buildings were largely abandoned when the industry declined in the two decades following the Second World War. In the 1970s the area was rediscovered by artists searching for affordable space in which to work and live. Over the past twenty years, the Leather District has reemerged as a vital mixed-use community where people live, work, and patronize a growing number of retail, service and cultural establishments. It is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

The Master Plan for the Leather District outlines a program of preservation coupled with modest growth, primarily in the form of adaptive reuse, of the District's historic buildings. It has been developed to guide the continued progress of the area into a locus of residential, cultural, commercial, and city life. It seeks to reconnect the Leather District with adjacent areas, by encouraging active pedestrian use of the public realm and by reinvigorating and expanding ground-floor retail, service, and cultural establishments. Because of its modest scaling, density, and mixed-use character, the Leather District creates a natural transition between the small scale, low-density architecture and neighborhood-based economy of Chinatown, and the larger scale, high density, regionally-focused economic development planned for the South Station Area.

To ensure that future development is compatible with the historic character and existing mix of uses within the Leather District, the Plan calls for design and preservation guidelines, and zoning which reinforces the traditional facade and cornice lines of existing buildings, regulates the size, location, design and construction materials of rooftop additions and rooftop mechanical units, and encourages the creation of additional residential units. It seeks to ensure that new development throughout the District reflects a human scale, both in massing and detailing, throughout.

The Leather District is a unique urban enclave in which small businesses, residents, working professionals, retailers, and proprietors of warehouses coexist in a seldom-seen blend of urban living. The Plan, which has been crafted through a community process, recognizes this as an important civic attribute.

To preserve the scale of the District, the proposed zoning will allow a maximum building height of eighty (80) feet, (100 feet with design review), and will limit floor area ratios (FAR) to six (6) times the size of the building lot (8 times with design review). The height may be attained either through new construction or rooftop additions. Developers wishing to build above 80 feet are subject to development review requirements encompassing urban design and historic preservation, as well as transportation planning, environmental review, and infrastructure impact.

The traffic impact created by development in the South Station Economic Development Area and the Midtown Cultural District, as well as the construction of the Central Artery and Third Harbor Tunnel, will be addressed through an ongoing neighborhood planning process bringing together residents, business people and representatives of state and local government.

The preparation of the Plan and proposed zoning, and their submission for public review and comment, are part of the ongoing process of developing new permanent zoning for the City of Boston. It is anticipated that the Plan and permanent zoning will provide for the preservation and managed growth of the Leather District in a manner responsive to the concerns of both residents and property owners.



Historic Overview

Prior to the landfill activities through which Boston grew during the nineteenth century, the Leather District was located in an area once known as the South Cove. The Boston coastline was lined with wharves, and by 1814 these wharves extended from the end of Essex Street, around Windmill Point, to Beach and Kneeland Streets.

By the 1830s the South Cove wharves had become the base of a thriving commercial waterfront, centered around the distilling industry. The South Cove area became a prime location for new commercial development due to its proximity to the business district, Fort Point Channel and Boston Harbor.

In 1833 the South Cove Corporation, a development entity, was given a charter to fill in the Cove and provide a terminal for the Boston and Worcester Railroad. By 1839 the filling was complete, resulting in the addition of seventy-seven acres of land (including the area of present day Chinatown) and a railroad terminal in the city. At roughly the same time, the largest hotel yet built in the country – the United States Hotel, designed by William Washburn – was constructed (located partially on the site of today's Lincoln Street Garage) to accommodate the city's railroad passengers.

The planned continued commercial expansion of the area was, however, prevented by the financial crash of 1837-38. The crash dampened investor interest in the new area, where the advantages of locating adjacent to a railroad facility were as yet unproven. As a result, in the 1840s and 50s South Cove developed into a mixed-use area, containing both residential and related commercial uses, as property owners, unable to execute commercial leases, responded to the growing demand for low cost housing to accommodate the steady stream of foreign immigrants entering Boston. Photographs from that period reveal that the area's architectural inclinations were similar to several houses still standing in the adjacent Chinatown area: Greek Revival vernacular style red brick row houses with pitched roofs.

As far back as the Colonial Era, the manufacture of boots and shoes was one of the state's leading industries. Boston was the marketing center for shoes and leather from the early 19th century, with sales from Boston wholesale houses totalling over \$1 million in 1828. Buyers flocked to Boston to purchase supplies where, by 1830, large manufacturers had

opened offices and stores to service their needs. Soon the majority of leading merchants had established businesses in town. The American House, still located on Hanover Street, was the headquarters for the trade, with its business center located at the North and South Markets, Fulton, Blackstone, and Shoe and Leather Streets.

By 1849 the leather trade had expanded and moved south to Pearl Street, which was then principally occupied by wholesale dry goods houses. Within a short time that district had replaced the Hanover Street area as the industry's new center, and blocks of houses on High Street were demolished to allow for the construction of warehouses. By 1860, New England was producing 80% of the shoes for domestic trade.

Then, on November 10, 1872, Boston suffered a great fire. The flames destroyed the City's Central Business District and devastated the physical center of the shoe and leather industry. The majority of the wholesale houses were burned, with the exception of several on Hanover Street; 229 wholesale shoe dealers, 189 leather concerns, and approximately 100 firms in related businesses were destroyed. At the time of the fire the warehouses were well stocked, so the loss in goods and machinery was great – over \$12 million. The fire destroyed nearly all of the finished leather for the Eastern states, resulting in an immediate price increase for hides and leather throughout the country.

In the years following the fire, the district was rebuilt, and for several years thereafter the trade remained in its original location. But gradually it shifted toward Summer Street near Church Green, where the New England Shoe and Leather Dealer Association (incorporated in 1871) took up new quarters in the Church Green Building. By 1880 the trade dominated the area now known as the Leather District.

The leather industry continued to grow well into the 20th century, prospering in its downtown location. In 1929 leather ranked fourth in total value of the city's products, following printing and publishing, women's clothing, laundry and machine shop products. Producing over 100,000 pairs of shoes per year, the district was an important component in Boston's economy.

By the end of World War II the leather industry had declined and many concerns had moved out of the district. While the industrial exodus continued throughout the 1960s, the architecture of the District remained intact. The sturdy post and beam construction of the warehouses served to preserve them in spite of years of abandonment and neglect. The isolation imposed on the area by the location of the Surface Artery

undoubtedly saved it from the redevelopment activities occurring in other parts of Boston during this period.

In the 1970s, the Leather District was discovered by artists and photographers searching for inexpensive space in which to live and work. Rentals were as low as \$.50 per square foot, and entire floors of buildings could be purchased for as little as \$50,000. The large brightly-lit spaces were well suited to the artists' needs, and the area began to enjoy a revitalization which has continued into the present. With the changing fortunes of the district have come increased rents, causing many of the original artist settlers to leave the District.

In 1984, One Financial Center was built on the edge of the Leather District, on the south side of the Central Artery. It was soon tenanted by large law and accounting firms, previously strangers to the area. The confidence this event fostered attracted smaller businesses, designers and architects, art galleries and restaurants to the area. The construction and opening of 745 Atlantic Avenue, an eleven story brick building whose design is sympathetic to the surrounding architecture, has brought additional commercial activity to the Leather District. The remaining artists and residents living there contribute to the District's diversity of population and uses.

While the Leather District today appears much as it did a half century ago, the conversion of many buildings to accommodate new uses has gradually transformed its image and character. The new vitality and economic growth of the area are appropriate to a commercial district directly associated with the industrial development of Boston and New England.



General Context

The Leather District is located in the southern-most portion of Boston's Central Business Area. The nine block district is physically bounded on the south by the Massachusetts Turnpike ramps, on the southeast by South Station, and on the west and north by the Surface Central Artery. These boundaries have kept it isolated from the Financial District and Chinatown, its closest neighbors. The District's central location and mixed use character does, however, serve as a transition from the office uses which dominate the adjacent Financial District across the Surface Artery, to the residential and commercial character of Chinatown. It also provides a physical shift in scale, mediating between the high-rise office buildings of the downtown, and the smaller-scaled historic buildings of Chinatown.

The future will see the physical barriers, long a factor in the preservation of the Leather District, removed. Construction of a new subterranean Central Artery is scheduled to commence in 1991-92. While the opportunity exists for stronger inter-neighborhood connections, the issues facing other districts will undoubtedly have a significant impact on the future growth of the Leather District. The development of affordable housing and industry to support a diversified economy and the creation of open space are significant issues facing Chinatown. Their solution should prove to be compatible with the future development of the Leather District as a mixed-use environment. The improvement to streetscape environments will create open space corridors, some of which will form strong pedestrian "bridges", and help reconnect the Leather District to Chinatown, the Financial District, and South Station, bringing increased pedestrian activity into the District. The emerging service economy of the Leather District stands to benefit from the present development of the Financial District and the planned development of South Station.





2

DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT ISSUES



2. Design and Development Policies

The Leather District today is undergoing major change. While originally the area contained primarily manufacturing and warehousing activities, by 1986 the primary land use had become back office. In many buildings, large factory and warehouse spaces have been converted into offices, whose occupants service the market created by the large office towers in the vicinity. In 1986 the land use breakdown in the Leather District was 76% office, 16% industrial, 6% retail, and 2% residential, with a total square footage for the district of approximately 3 million. Projections for future growth call for a 16% increase in square footage for the area, primarily through the development of two under-utilized sites, rooftop additions and the rehabilitation of existing structures, with increases primarily in office and retail space and a decline in industrial space.

Between 1986 and 1988, the Leather District was host to \$52.4 million worth of development. One new construction project, Trammell Crow's 745 Atlantic Avenue, is responsible for half that sum, costing \$25 million dollars for the 157,723 square foot office building. Two projects have added floors to buildings: 114-122 South Street added two stories at a cost of \$350,000, while 137-139 South Street added one floor at a cost of \$450,000. There were three adaptive reuse projects in the area: the MBTA converted the South Station Headhouse into 73,360 square feet of private leasable office space at a cost of \$12.5 million, Hamilton Realty converted the Essex Hotel at 695 Atlantic Avenue into 143,800 square feet of office space for \$10.8 million, and 166-168 Lincoln Street was converted from a showroom to office space for \$342,000. Additionally, the renovation of 100,250 square feet of office space costing \$3 million occurred in the Pilgrim Building at 210 South Street.

Buildings in the Leather District are well preserved, hence most development opportunities there will be adaptive reuse projects or rooftop additions. Several sites within the district are underutilized at present, including the Lincoln Street Garage and the open lot behind the Essex Hotel. Should these be developed, the new uses must be sympathetic to the historic district, especially since these sites are within its physical boundaries.

Urban Design Objectives

One of the primary urban design objectives in the Leather District is to retain and enhance its architectural character. The following are ways to achieve this goal:

- Through restoration and rehabilitation, retain the historic warehouse structures and other buildings which contribute to the District's character.
- Maintain a consistent streetscape language to emphasize its unique quality as a well preserved, cohesive historical district through streetwall and setback requirements.
- Ensure that any new development or rooftop additions in the area contribute to the existing historic character of the district and limit growth so that it comports with existing buildings.

-Building heights should be limited so that they are in keeping with existing buildings; As of Right, 80' / FAR 6; with design review, permitted 100' / FAR 7.

-Design guidelines for new development should be enforced to ensure the preservation and enhancement of the District; design guidelines are to be followed for development parcels, infill development and rooftop additions. Presently, there are two development parcels to be considered, the Lincoln Street Garage Site and the surface parking lot on Essex Street. There are no other empty sites within the Leather District, however there are several sites where existing buildings do not contribute to the architectural quality of the district.

- Emphasize the unique character of the district by allowing adjacent districts to differ architecturally, while still maintaining sensitivity towards the scale of the urban form. Issues that are key to this are the block sizes of adjacent new development, its height and sense of street wall. New development adjacent to the Leather District should be sensitive to its historic design features, without being limited to mimicking them. It should be compatible with the Leather District's scale and massing. The intent should be to emphasize the historic district rather than to extend it so that its boundaries are imperceptible.

A second key urban design objective is to reconnect the Leather District with its surrounding area to alleviate the sense of isolation that the District currently suffers. The following are ways to achieve this goal:

- Create a more continuous pedestrian environment between the Leather District and its neighbors, which include:
 - Chinatown, across the Surface Artery at Beech and Kneeland Streets;

-
- the Financial District, across Dewey Square;
 - the South Station Economic Development Area, across Atlantic Avenue; and
 - the Gateway Parcel, across Kneeland Street.

This can be accomplished through redevelopment and the creation of open space on the District's edges.

- Reinforce views into the surrounding districts with new development or open space on the edge of or adjacent to the Leather District. The existence of clear views from within the district, towards adjacent districts, is important and can be reinforced by stronger pedestrian and vehicular connections. Important views are:
 - The Financial District, looking across Dewey Square;
 - The Chinatown Gateway, looking down Beach Street;
 - The South Station Economic Development Area, looking down Essex, East, Beach and Kneeland Streets; and
 - The Gateway Parcel, looking down Lincoln and South Streets.

While intent on retaining and enhancing the historic architectural character of the Leather District, it is important to reinforce and encourage the renovation and reuse of existing buildings within the District. It is vital to maintain and to encourage a wide variety of land-uses. The mix of office, retail, commercial art galleries, and residential uses should continue, while allowing for the continued presence of light industry such as the design, manufacture, packaging, servicing or handling of products such as ceramics, small electronics, leather, medical instruments, furniture and sculpture, paper, printing and photographic supplies, that have historically or are currently located in this area. A key issue in this dynamic part of the city is the juxtaposition of light industry with neighborhood and commercial uses.

New Development Guidelines

The following are the development guidelines for the Leather District:

- A strong street wall should be maintained, with no setbacks permitted below the established street wall height. Block parcels should be clearly delineated; materials should contribute to the sense of a unified street wall and should be sensitive to the District's existing architecture.

-
- The base of buildings should be emphasized, and the second level delineated. The entrance should be recessed and, as much as possible, store front windows used on the ground level.
 - The top portions of buildings should be emphasized by heavy cornice lines and/or a change in material and windows at the uppermost levels. Slight variation of cornice heights from one building to the next is common and therefore permitted.
 - Fenestration, detailing and trim should express the richness and texture of the existing architecture. Horizontal trim lines on the facades of existing buildings are very important and should be taken into consideration in any new development.

Rooftop Additions and Rooftop Mechanical Units

The architectural quality of the Leather District is one of strong street walls and moderate height buildings which leave a significant amount of sky exposed to view from the level of the public street. The majority of structures in the District are masonry warehouse buildings constructed in the late 19th century. The District's image as a unique, identifiable part of the City is due, in part, to the uniformity of exterior proportion, scale, massing, window treatment, materials, colors and architectural detailing evident in its buildings.

Because there are few vacant or underutilized buildings in the Leather District, in the future much of the development that occurs will consist of rooftop additions to existing buildings. In recent years, rooftop additions which are not compatible with the District's historical and architectural character have been built atop existing historical buildings, disturbing the architectural integrity of the area. Such appropriate development can and should be managed.

To preserve the architectural quality of the District, the proposed zoning provides that rooftop additions and rooftop mechanical units be scaled and located so as to be invisible from public streets within the Leather District. Because all additions are visible from someplace within the District (if only from the rooftop of an adjacent building), to ensure design compatibility, all rooftop additions and rooftop mechanical units (even those which are not visible from the street) are subject to design review by the Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA). In reviewing such additions, the BRA will seek to ensure that they are designed so that they are consistent with the proportions, scaling and massing of existing

architecture in the District, and compatible with materials, colors and detailing that prevail there.





RETAIL/COMMERCIAL



RESIDENTIAL



OFFICE



LIGHT INDUSTRIAL



PARKING



OPEN SPACE



ART GALLERY



HOTEL



PUBLIC BUILDINGS



INSTITUTIONAL



LAND USE GROUND FLOOR



RETAIL/COMMERCIAL

RESIDENTIAL

OFFICE

LIGHT INDUSTRIAL

PARKING

OPEN SPACE

ART GALLERY

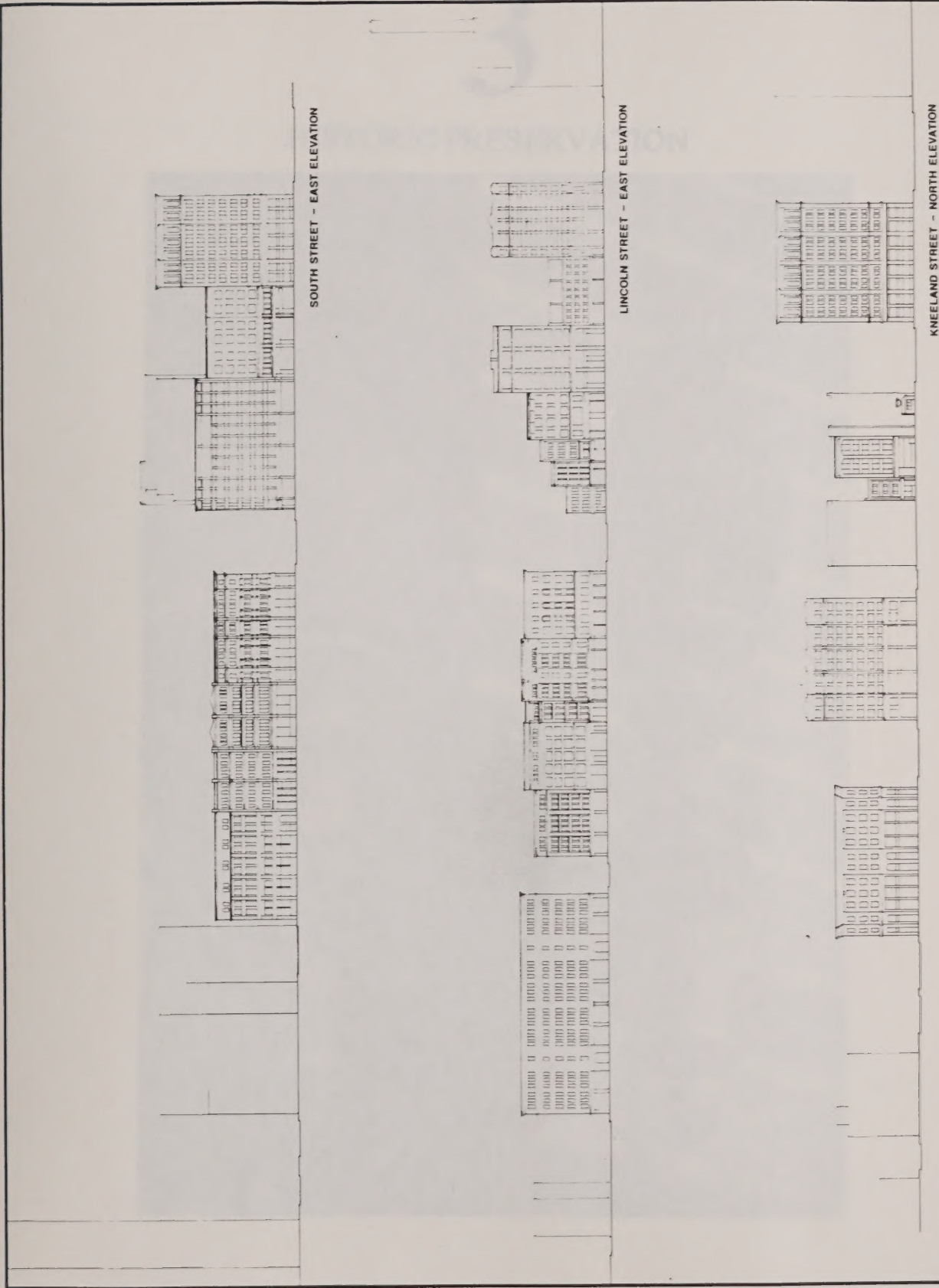
HOTEL

PUBLIC BUILDINGS

INSTITUTIONAL

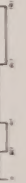
LAND USE UPPER FLOORS

STREET ELEVATIONS



Denotes New Development Potential

SCALE:



Boston Redevelopment Authority

LEATHER DISTRICT PLAN

City of Boston: Raymond J. Flynn, Mayor Boston Redevelopment Authority: Stephen Coughlin, Executive Director

3

HISTORIC PRESERVATION



3. Historic Preservation

The Leather District is one of Boston's most homogeneous, intact collections of late 19th century commercial architecture. The close succession of the buildings' construction, which occurred primarily during the 1880s and 1890s, largely accounts for their consistent fabric and stylistic integrity. The district is characterized by red brick structures with flat roofs and a uniform street wall plane, featuring continuous floor levels, band courses and cornice lines, and brownstone ornamentation. The buildings constructed around the turn of the century were generally of a lighter color brick, which is characteristic of the then popular Classical Revival style.

The commercial development and reconstruction of Boston's Leather District following the fire of 1872, was concurrent with similar architectural events in New York and Chicago. However, in response to the fire Boston developed stringent new building codes which prevented the creation of comparable stylistic and architectural trends. Boston's concern for fire safety seems to have led to design solutions which utilized mill-type construction and precluded the incorporation of the structural innovations that characterized Chicago's reconstruction after its fire. Building heights were restricted in relation to street widths, while party and fire wall regulations limited roof and structured forms.

The area's consistent architectural quality suggests a clear interest in achieving a district with a distinctive architectural expression. In many cases, owners retained architects to design the new buildings rather than hiring contractors, who might have been expected to erect structures of a more utilitarian nature. The influences of major Boston architectural firms, mainly H.H. Richardson and Peabody and Stearns, is consistently evident. However, more than other factors, the requirements for efficient and economical manufacturing dictated the predominant design schemes. Leather industrialists and related wholesalers required space for display, offices, and work areas for warehousing and manufacturing. Thus a street floor was frequently designed with huge display windows set in sturdy cast iron piers and or columns. Often, a high basement with windows was placed below these to allow for additional display areas. Corner entrances permitted multi-directional access and less use of valuable floor space. The second floor was also given prominent windows with decorative stone or brick frames to identify the director's offices. The next three to four floors were devoted to job work, production, or warehousing and had a small honeycomb of uniformly

arranged plain windows. The attic level (storage) was differentiated by a row of numerous small windows.

The heart of the district can be seen at South Street, between East, Tufts and Beach Streets, a block that was constructed primarily between 1883-88, and which retains the highest degree of architectural integrity. The east side of South Street was developed first; the double building at Number 102-113 is of particular interest, being the only structure in the district designated in the decorative Queen Anne style. South Street's west side is Richardsonian in style, and was initially developed by J. Franklin Faxon. Particularly significant in this group are 141-157 South Street, a Richardsonian Romanesque style building that serves as an anchor for this harmonious block of late nineteenth century buildings, the narrow building at Number 121-123 with its distinctive monumental round arch, and the Beebe Building at Number 127-131. Faxon also developed the 103 Lincoln Street building in the district, in addition to his many development projects throughout Boston.

Several larger scaled nineteenth century structures are also located within the district. Among these are the Lincoln Building at 66-86 Lincoln Street, a Second Renaissance Revival style building by William T. Sears dating from 1894. This structure is actually the second commercial building on the site, the first having been destroyed in a fire in 1888. Sears is perhaps best known for his partnership with Charles A. Cummings, an alliance that produced several landmark buildings in Boston. The building's first occupant was the Commonwealth Shoe and Leather Company, the originators of the famous "Bostonian" shoe. Another notable building is the Classical Revival/Beau Arts style 77-99 South Street, designed in 1899 by the prominent firm of Winslow, Wetherell and Bigelow. This building is particularly distinctive for its steel framing, one of only three such structures in the Leather District designed prior to 1900.

An outstanding building in the district is the 1899 Beaux Arts style Albany Building at 2-32 Albany Street. The Albany Building was one of the last to be erected in the district, and as such utilizes modern steel frame construction techniques. It was designed by Peabody and Stearns, a significant Boston architectural firm of the late 19th century. The building was constructed by the Norcross Brothers, who also served as contractors on several of Richardson's buildings.

The Albany Building was the location of the United Shoe Machinery Company from 1901-1929. Formed in 1899 as a consolidation of three major shoe manufacturing companies, United Shoe controlled 98% of the

shoe manufacturing business by 1910. Another original occupant of the Albany Building was the Frank W. Whitcher Company, one of the oldest manufacturers of shoe leather findings in the country. The company was founded in 1826 by John Tillson, whose first shop was located at 8 Hanover Street.

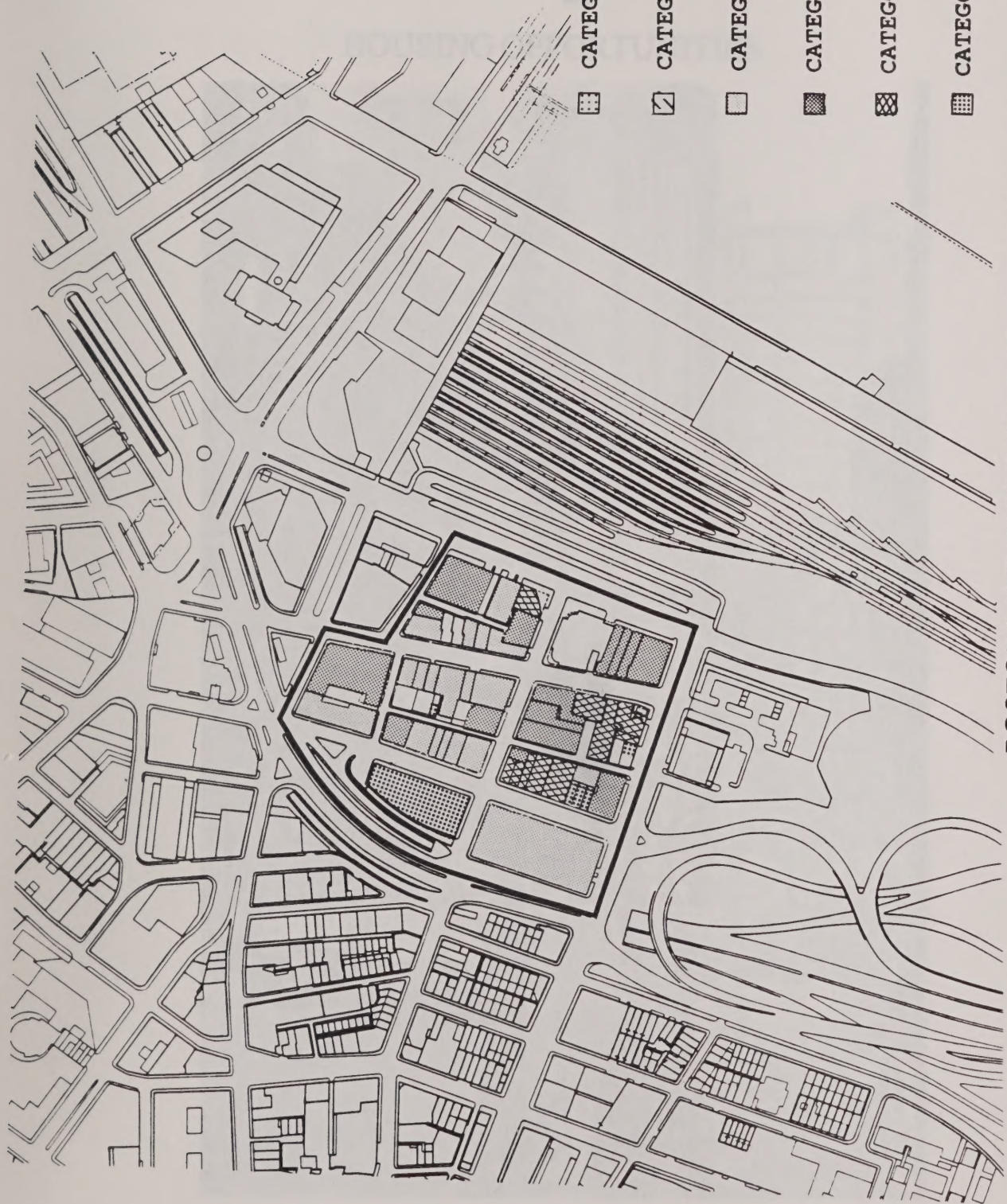
In 1899 the Beaux Arts style Essex Hotel at 687-695 Atlantic Avenue was designed by Arthur Bowditch. The Essex was one of Boston's more prominent hotels built to serve the numerous passengers from the newly-created South Union Terminal (South Station).

During the first twenty years of the twentieth century, several buildings constructed in the Leather District utilized the steel frame construction technique that was in vogue, although their facades continued to reflect traditional classical influences. The Pilgrim Building at 204-216 South Street designed by Monks and Johnson in 1919, is an excellent example of such a structure.

The preservation goals for the district are to:

- Establish protective zoning regulations for the Leather District, including limits on building heights and design guidelines for rooftop additions and rooftop mechanical units.
- Establish careful design review guidelines and procedures to ensure sympathetic and compatible infill buildings.





- CATEGORY I
- CATEGORY II
- CATEGORY III
- CATEGORY IV
- CATEGORY V
- CATEGORY VI

BOSTON LANDMARKS COMMISSION BUILDING RATINGS (BLC)

4

HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES

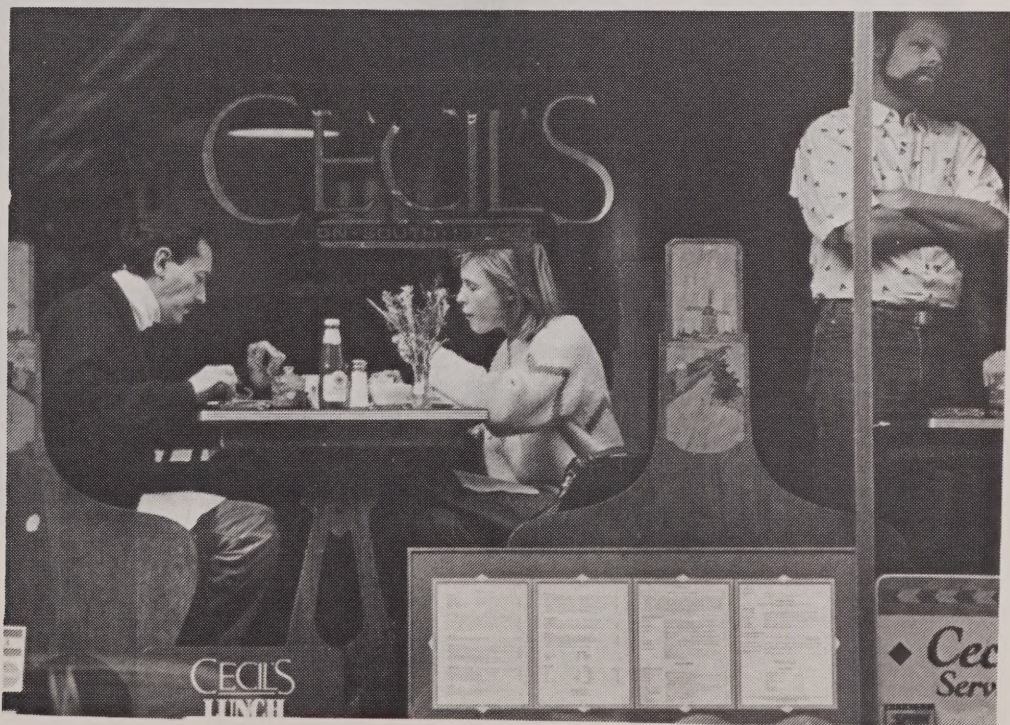


4. Housing Opportunities

Although it began a century ago as a center of industry and commerce, today the Leather District is a strong residential enclave of artists and professional people. Many not only live in the District, but work there as well, in studios and offices designed to take advantage of the large, sunlit, loft-style spaces. The character of the area is, in part, derived from the mixture of uses that occurs there. Under the proposed zoning, artists' live/work space is "allowed," rather than "conditional."

Protecting and promoting residential-uses of the Leather District is a priority of the Plan. Promoting housing in the Leather District supports the small-scale retail and service activities of Chinatown and reinforces its role as an architectural transition between Chinatown and the larger-scaled South Station Economic Development Area.

The Proposed Zoning calls for the designation of the District as a Housing Priority Area; under the designation, large commercial development must be accompanied by the creation of housing, either on- or off-site, within the District. For any proposed project involving either new construction or the change of an existing use over 10,000 square feet, or for any project involving substantial rehabilitation of an existing building and totaling over 10,000 square feet, a minimum of 25% of gross floor area shall be devoted to residential uses. Finally, space created through the subdivision of existing residential units will be reserved for housing.



5. Transportation Access

The street pattern in the Leather District is a one-way system. This was developed in an attempt to eliminate through traffic and ease congestion from on-street loading procedures. The location of the Leather District is ideal for access to Boston's regional highway system, which comes downtown by way of the Central Artery and connects the north and south highways. These are the Southeast Expressway, which services the South Shore, and Interstate Route 93 and US Route 1 which service the northern suburbs. The Central Artery is also key in linking the Leather District with Storrow Drive, providing service to areas north and northwest of the city. The Massachusetts Turnpike Extension, adjacent to the district, provides service to the western suburbs. On the downside, convenient access from the Leather District to the regional highway system is often blocked by congestion at ramp intersections located at Kneeland Street and Dewey Square.

Arterial streets bound the Leather District, but do not run through it. They are Essex Street, the Surface Artery, Kneeland Street, and Atlantic Avenue. The Leather District's perceived isolation from adjacent districts results from the location of these major roadways, which create barriers at the District's borders. Although heavy through traffic is kept outside, congestion of local streets still occurs, due to on-street loading activities at warehouse buildings on Atlantic and South Streets. Trucks not only double park for loading purposes, but they also park perpendicular to the buildings and use residential parking and meters within the area, leaving traffic seriously constricted as a consequence.

New infrastructure improvements anticipated for the future will both benefit and have an impact upon the Leather District. The redesign and depression of the Central Artery, and subsequently the redesign of the Surface Artery, will contribute to the area's beauty by creating new tree-lined boulevards. The Third Harbor Tunnel Project, and the relocation of ramps in relation to the Massachusetts Turnpike and the Central Artery, will ultimately have similarly positive impacts on the District, as will the future new development of South Station.

Parking is very limited within the Leather District and, as in many neighborhoods, demand exceeds supply. There are two parking facilities within the district; the Lincoln Street Garage, which accommodates 350 cars, and a nearby lot bordered by Essex, East and South Streets, which accommodates 68 cars. Limited on-street parking is also available within

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TRANSPORTATION ACCESS

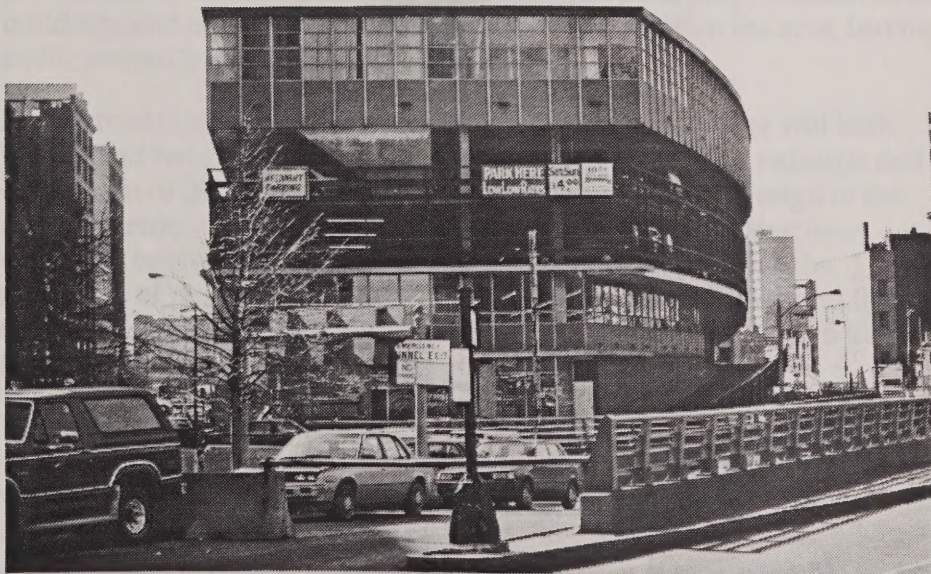


the district, much of which is restricted to resident permit holders. Parking is a primary concern to both residents and business people. Short term on-street parking is essential for the continued success and expansion of retail and commercial uses, while off-street parking should be reserved for long term uses.

The Leather District is served by the MBTA's Red Line at South Station. Commuter rail service to southern and western suburbs also departs from South Station, which is a terminus for express and local buses.

Policy goals

- Mitigate adverse impacts on the Leather District of future infrastructure improvements and new development. Provide improved access from the Leather District to the regional highway system and to adjacent districts within the city;
- resolve traffic problems in the district, which are magnified by on-street loading procedures, through a carefully balanced land use plan;
- study existing parking conditions and project future parking needs; study the group of people who use existing available parking.





6

STREETSCAPE/PUBLIC REALM



6. Streetscape/Public Realm

The dense urban fabric of the Leather District makes open space initiatives unnecessary and even inappropriate. The main focus of the Open Space Plan in the Leather District is the quality of the streetscapes and their connection to the adjacent districts of Dewey Square/Central Artery, Chinatown/Surface Artery, the Gateway Parcel, and South Station/Atlantic Avenue.

The programming of adjacent districts' open spaces should accommodate the diverse user population of the area, which ranges from resident artists to Chinatown residents to Downtown office workers. These open space opportunities should facilitate access to and from the Leather District, and eliminate physical and visual barriers. New open space adjacent to the Leather District should facilitate its reconnection with the existing downtown network of open space.

Improvements to the public realm will be focused on the District's streetscape, the elements of which include signage, lighting, sidewalk paving and street furniture. The streetscape improvements should be designed to accentuate and frame views to adjacent districts and encourage pedestrian travel. Additionally consistent streetscapes will emphasize the unique historic character of the Leather District.



7

ACHIEVING THE PLAN



7.ACHIEVING THE PLAN

The IPOD Planning Process

In 1987 the Zoning Commission established an Interim Planning Overlay District (IPOD) for the Downtown which required that detailed plans be prepared for eleven districts in the downtown area. As one of the eleven areas in the downtown, the Leather District has been the focus of a planning study, the goal of which is to establish new permanent zoning regulations to replace the area's outdated zoning.

The Downtown IPOD required similar studies for ten other downtown areas, including the Midtown Cultural District, where a plan has already been completed and, in September, 1989, new permanent zoning regulations for the North Station and South Station Districts adopted by the City. The Huntington/Prudential District Zoning was adopted in January 1990. The BRA Board voted to approve the proposed zoning for the Chinatown District in January 1990.

Proposed Zoning

The Proposed Zoning for the Leather District has been drafted to ensure that new development is compatible with and reinforces the historic image and existing mix of uses within the District. It establishes a comprehensive set of urban design, preservation and use guidelines which will ensure that all new development is responsive to the existing buildings in the District in scale, design, choice of building materials, and uses.

The Proposed Zoning will permit modestly-scaled "infill" development to occur on vacant or underutilized sites. It will establish design regulations and guidelines for property owners wishing to erect rooftop additions or new structures, or to change the current uses of their property, and guide them to do so in a manner that is consistent with the District's high-quality design and use of materials. Only a few vacant or underutilized sites exist in the District where the construction of new buildings would be economically feasible. Hence, for the most part, the current uses and activities of the area will be protected and allowed to flourish.

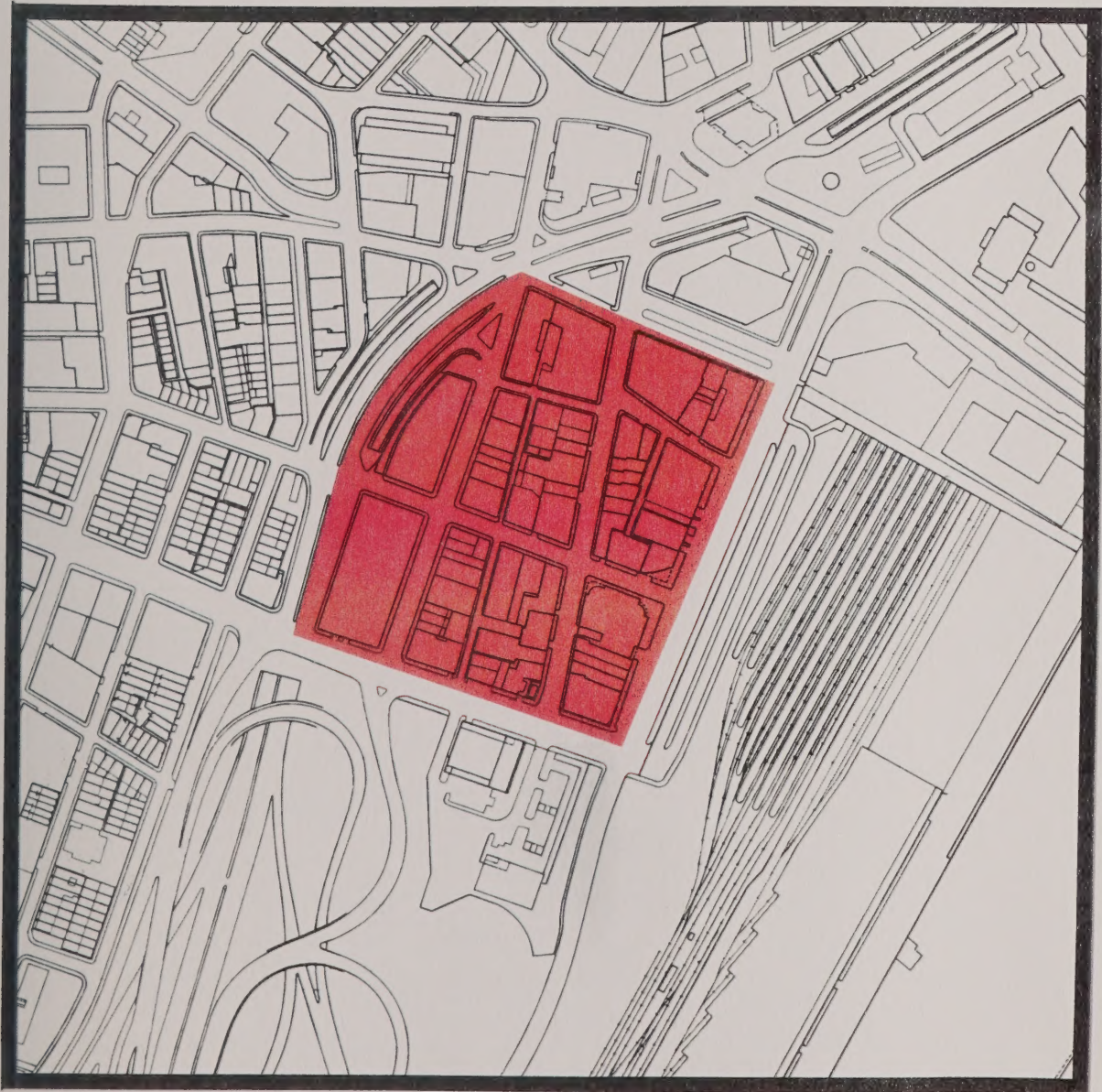
LEATHER DISTRICT PROPOSED ZONING

Achieving the long-term success of the plan will draw on the collective will, commitment, initiative and ingenuity of the Leather District community, local business leaders and representatives of City and State government. In partnership, these individuals will implement the policy intent and commitment they share to preserving a unique historic neighborhood and reinforcing its continued development as a residential, commercial, artistic and service center within downtown Boston.



Leather District Protection Area
SDF/CAR 9 to 100 / PAR 6

LEATHER DISTRICT PROPOSED ZONING



Leather District Protection Area
80'/FAR 6 to 100'/FAR 8

